

THE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST  
HERMENEUTICS EXEGETICAL PAPER  
LUKE 2:52  
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*Introductory Context*

The Gospel according to Luke was written by Luke, the beloved physician, approximately 57 – 60 A.D. The gospel according to Luke accounts the life Jesus Christ and as the gospel of Mark is the gospel to the Romans and the Gospel of Matthew is the gospel to the Jews and the gospel of John is the gospel to the world...so the gospel of Luke is the gospel to the Greek or Gentile. He (Luke) presented Jesus Christ as the perfect Man, the universal Man, the very person the Greeks were looking for<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, as the gospel of Mark presents Jesus as the perfect servant and the gospel of John presents Jesus as Divine and the Gospel Matthew presents Jesus as the perfect King...so the Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as the perfect man. The Greek culture is enamored with man and traditionally believed that man is able, through wisdom and knowledge, to elevate himself to know God, or as they would articulate, to know the Gods. The Greeks attempted to perfect humanity and to develop the perfect man<sup>2</sup>. Hence, the Gospel of Luke reaches those who are attempting to find the perfect man, either themselves or another. The Gospel of Luke presents Jesus as that perfect man, in perfect union with God and in the perfect will of God. He (Luke) presented the person of Jesus Christ as the perfect, divine Man and savior of the world<sup>3</sup>. Luke 2:52 capsulates this concept in one scripture, “*and Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*”. Luke 2:52 outlines the humanity of Jesus by articulating his two-fold growth as well as the grace of God upon him and his early

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1 – J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Volume IV* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio Publishing, 1983) p. 240

2 – J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Volume IV* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio Publishing, 1983) p. 239

3 – J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Volume IV* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio Publishing, 1983) p. 239

acceptance with man. Luke 2:52 is expressing the humanity of Jesus by outlining his inner growth and outer maturation while articulating his gracious relationship with God and man. Luke says he grew and increased both physically and in wisdom and that the favor of God was upon him<sup>4</sup>.

### *The Silent Boyhood Years*

Luke 2:52 is a scripture that some connect with the silent years of Jesus. The so-called silent years of Jesus' childhood has sometimes been the inopportune time for many to embellish His life and superimpose their conjecture upon the text. Further, some expositors would fall into the trap of rational interpretation, interjecting their own reasonings into the text instead of drawing out the meaning of the text through proper exegesis. Exegesis is the careful, systematic study of the scripture to discover the original, intended meaning<sup>5</sup>. Exegesis refers to drawing the meaning out of the text of scripture, while eisogesis refers to superimposing a meaning onto the text<sup>6</sup>. Through Rationalistic Interpretation, the rationalist attempts to expound the Scriptures in such a way as to make them understanding and acceptable to the reason<sup>7</sup>.

As responsible, interpreters we seek to employ whatever rational methods will enable us to understand the correct meaning of the biblical texts<sup>8</sup>. As conservative interpreters, we take

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4 – D. Fiensy, *The College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1994) p. 97

5 – G. Fee and D. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All its Worth 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 2003) p. 23

6 – R. Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 5

7 – R. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980) p. 169

8 – W. Klien et al., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004) p.164

the Bible literally and thus, for the purposes of this exegetical paper, the silent years will remain silent. From Nazareth, Jesus was taken to Jerusalem, a journey of eighty miles by the most direct route, at the age of twelve. During the remainder of the silent years in Nazareth, we presume he attended the local synagogue and learned the carpenters' trade<sup>9</sup>. Luke also recounts the story of Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem confounding the teachers of the law (Luke 2:41-50). But apart from this meager information the four Gospels tell nothing. Their purpose was to narrate his ministry, especially his death and resurrection<sup>10</sup>. As a result, we should be careful when arguing from silence. Scholars usually recognize that arguments from silence are weak; but they are stronger if a case can be made in any particular context, we might have expected further comment from the speaker or narrator<sup>11</sup>. Hence, the focus of Luke 2:52 should not be the addition of boyhood conjecture, but rather the focus on Jesus' Deity and Humanity. The boyhood of Jesus should be approached from the standpoint of the truth revealed about the Incarnation. Deity did not eclipse humanity so as to render the process of learning unnecessary. Christ grew in body and advanced in knowledge and in wisdom that enabled him to make proper use of what he knew<sup>12</sup>. Christ's development as a human being was normal in every respect, with two major exceptions, Christ always did the will of God & he never sinned<sup>13</sup>.

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9 – C. Pfeiffer, *Baker Bible Atlas, Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979) p. 192

10 – D. Fiensy, *The College Press NIV Commentary* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1994) p. 97

11 – D. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996) p. 139

12 – J. Douglas and M. Tenney, *New International Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1987) p. 204

13 – R. Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 87

*The Denial of His Humanity*

Although Luke 2:52 is a scripture that does not accentuate the silent years, and clearly punctuates his humanity, his humanity has constantly been challenged. The humanity of Jesus Christ has been and is challenged by many to include heretic cults such as the Gnostics, the Docetists, the Monarchians and Apollinarianism. Theologians such as Schleiermacher and Bultmann also challenged the biblical humanity of Christ. Docetism believed that Jesus had just a mere phantasmal body<sup>14</sup>. The Gnostics, believing that all matter was evil and the spirit was good, could not accept the joining of the two and still accept a pure Jesus. Thus, they believed that God descended upon Jesus at baptism and left him at the resurrection<sup>15</sup>. The Monarchians saw Jesus as merely a mode or manifestation of God, in whom they recognized no distinction of persons<sup>16</sup>. Rodolf Bultmann, objected to the idea of a physical perception of Jesus<sup>17</sup>. Although Apollinarianism held to a human Jesus, it denied the human nature of Jesus, thus stating that Jesus has no human will, human reason and mind<sup>18</sup>. As a result, to deny the sinless human nature of Jesus was just as heretically equal to denying the humanity of Jesus. Indeed, to deny his Humanity is determined by scripture as heresy and an anti-Christ spirit. “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:

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14 – E. Cairns, *Christianity Through the Centuries: A History of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996) p. 97

15 – L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1941) p. 306

16 – L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1941) p. 306

17 – M. Erickson, *Christian Theology 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) p. 724

18 – M. Erickson, *Christian Theology 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) p. 732

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (I John 4:2-3, King James Version).

Moreover, in addition to the danger of denying the humanity of Jesus, there is also a danger when Jesus’ humanity is accepted by an extreme view. In the nineteenth century, Schleiermacher stood at the head of a new development, ascribing Jesus as superhuman. The new view was anthropological and the result was anthropocentric. As a result, the supernatural Christ made way for a human Jesus, albeit, it also made way for the doctrine of a divine man<sup>19</sup>. As lethal as denying the Deity of Christ, so too is the denial of the humanity of Christ.

#### *The Necessity of His Humanity*

The humanity of Christ was necessary for Jesus to be our mediator. Jesus could not be a mediator between God and man without being both<sup>20</sup>. Luke presents the perfect, divine Son of God as our great High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, able to extend help, mercy, and love to us<sup>21</sup>. In Jesus’ perfect humanity, he is our compassionate high priest. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15, King James Version). In Jesus’ perfect humanity, he overcame the wicked one. “Forasmuch then as the children are

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19 – L. Berkhof , *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1941) p. 309

20 – L. Parkinson, *Orthodox & Heresy: Where to Draw the Line* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 1991) p. 25

21 – J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Volume IV* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio Publishing, 1983) p. 239

partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14, King James Version). Moreover, the humanity of Christ is necessary for the suffering of Jesus to commence, hence, his humanity suffered on the cross and coupled with his Deity, provided complete atonement for our redemption. If he was only God and never became man, then he could not have died a sacrificial death for our sins<sup>22</sup>. Additionally, as we recognize the humanity of Jesus Christ, we do not discount his Deity. To deny either the undiminished Deity or the perfect humanity of Christ is to put oneself outside the pale of orthodoxy<sup>23</sup>. Further, Jesus Christ is 100% God and 100% man, full Deity, containing the human nature of man, yet without sin. Scripture declares, “for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9, King James Version). As a result of the incarnation, Jesus became the God-man. He was at all times both God and man as He lived on earth. When Jesus became flesh, He voluntarily subjected Himself to human limitations<sup>24</sup>. Furthermore, Jesus Christ never lost his Deity, he simply chose to lay aside his Godly prerogatives, while retaining his humanity, and thus voluntarily yielded Himself for our atonement. Scripture confirms this premise, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he

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22 – L. Parkinson, *Orthodox & Heresy: Where to Draw the Line* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 1991) p. 25

23 – R. Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 86

24 – E. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), p. 195



humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5-8, King James Version). Indeed, Jesus Christ is confirmed of this particular promise, found in Psalm 40:6-8, quoted in Hebrews, “wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:5-7, King James Version).

### *Content*

#### I. And Jesus grew

##### a. *In wisdom*

The word here for *grew* is found in the New International Version (NIV) and word *increased* is found in the KJV. Both words are translated *prokopto* in the Greek  $\text{\u03a0\u03c1\u039f\u039a\u039e\u03a9\u03a9}$  and is translated other places as advance and proceed<sup>25</sup>. *Prokopto*  $\text{\u03a0\u03c1\u039f\u039a\u039e\u03a9\u03a9}$  is also defined as to strike forward<sup>26</sup>. Considering the verb tense, the definition and the contextual usage of the word in other scriptures, *prokopto*  $\text{\u03a0\u03c1\u039f\u039a\u039e\u03a9\u03a9}$  is implying growth in action. This growth is exemplified in his humanity, not his Deity. Jesus’ wisdom grew in his humanity. His Deity was never diminished nor did his Deity grow. In the perfections of his divine nature there could be no increase; but this meant of his human nature, his body increased in statute and bulk, he

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25 – W. Vine, *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Old Testament & New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997) p. 584

26 – R. Young, *Analytic Concordance to the Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984) p. 513

The Humanity of Jesus

grew in the growing age; and his soul increased in wisdom and in all the endowments of a human soul<sup>27</sup>. He is God, from the beginning, never changing, the same yesterday, today and forever. The Lord Jesus Christ is both truly and fully God and truly and fully man<sup>28</sup>. Scripture declares, “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, King James Version).

*b. In stature*

Jesus grew in the fullness physically as any other child, yet without sin, yet without blemish. Jesus grew as a normal child would grow and experienced the common development of a growing child. He had the limitations of human nature. There were times when Jesus got hungry (Matt 4:2) and, on at least one occasion, He had to stop His journey to rest (John 4:6)<sup>29</sup>. Not only Jesus’ birth, but also his life indicates that he had a physical human nature. We are told that he grew ‘in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men’ (Luke 2:52). He grew physically, nourished by food and water. He did not have unlimited physical strength. Yet his body must have been more nearly perfect in some respects than ours, because there was in him none of the sin, neither original nor personal that affects health<sup>30</sup>. Indeed, Jesus Christ is without sin & without blemish. “For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, & made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26, King James Version).

27 – M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume V* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1708) p. 609

28 – L. Parkinson, *Orthodox & Heresy: Where to Draw the Line* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 1991) p. 24

29 – E. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002), p. 202

30 – M. Erickson, *Christian Theology 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998) p. 723

## II. In favor with God

### a. God

Christ's development as a human being was normal in every respect, with two major exceptions, Christ always did the will of God and he never sinned<sup>31</sup>. Although it is wonderful to be blessed, it is even more wonderful to have the favor of God. To a degree, everyone is blessed, "...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45, King James Version), only those who please God, partake of his special grace, the intimate favor of God. Paul was thankful for God's favor, despite encumbered with infirmities, he did not ask for God's blessings, but rather relished in the God's grace. "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Corinthians 12:9-10, King James Version). Jesus, from his childhood, pleased the Father and partook of his favor. The scriptures bear witness, "and he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29, King James Version) and "while he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matthew 17:5, King James Version). In the days of Jesus, man saw an individual that spoke the

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31 – R. Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 87

word of God, that lived the word of God and that was the word of God. His miracles were evident of the loving grace and mercy of God. As a result, all who watched Jesus or heard of Jesus, knew that the grace of God was upon him.

*b. and men*

In all those graces that rendered him acceptable to God and man. Herein Christ accommodated himself to his estate of humiliation, that, as he condescended to be an infant, a child, a youth, so the image of God shone brighter in him, when he grew up to be a youth, than it did, or could, while he was an infant and a child<sup>32</sup>. Although Jesus later in life was attacked verbally and physically by man, he was never a rabble-rouser. He never unnecessarily stirred up any hornet's nest. Scripture supports this statement, "behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust". (Matthew 12:18-21, King James Version). To this end, although man would not willingly bestow his own grace upon Jesus, man's grace was upon Jesus, divinely orchestrating the footsteps of man, providentially guiding every circumstance of man and structuring his sovereign plan...to fulfill God's will and God's Divine purpose.

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32 – R. Rhodes, *The Complete Book of Bible Answers* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 610

*Application*

Luke 2:52 accentuates the fact of Jesus' humanity. He grew in wisdom (mentally), in stature (physically), in favor with God (spiritually) and man (socially). In every area, the Lord Jesus Christ was growing into perfect manhood<sup>33</sup>. As such, Luke 2:52 accentuates the fact that we should grow in wisdom, in stature and in favor with God and man. A full human life is not unbalanced. It was important to Jesus – and it should be important to all believers – to develop fully and harmoniously in each of these key areas: physical, mental, social and spiritual<sup>34</sup>. All too often, parents ensure that their children have all they need physically in this world to aid them as they grow. Indeed, as our children grow physically, they should be supported. However, parents should do more, parents should nurture them spiritually, so their children can also grow in the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord. Young people, as they grow in stature, should grow in wisdom, and then, as they grow in wisdom, they will grow in favour with God and man<sup>35</sup>. “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when is old, he will not depart from it” (King James Version, Proverbs 22:15). As we raise our children to grow spiritually, their life will be a testimony to their biblical tutelage, and, as a result, cultivate favor with the Lord & with man. Finally, Luke 2:52 teaches the humanity of Jesus Christ. Other scriptures confirm Luke 2:52, “for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own

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33 – J. Vernon McGee, *Thru the Bible Volume IV* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Radio Publishing, 1983) p. 257

34 – Life Application Bible, *New International Version*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 1991) p. 1794

35 – M. Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume V* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1708) p. 610

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3, King James Version) and “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14, King James Version). Lastly, Luke 2:52 is a key scripture that teaches both the necessity of Jesus’ Deity for salvation and the necessity of Jesus’ Humanity for salvation. If he was only a man, then his life would have proved that other men like us can potentially save ourselves by good works and human merit. But if he was only God and never man, then he could not have died a sacrificial death for our sins<sup>36</sup>.

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36 – L. Parkinson, *Orthodox & Heresy: Where to Draw the Line* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson, 1991) p. 25

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